

Water Issues Town Hall – July 1, 2008

Town of Sahuarita, Mayor Skelton presentation

Congresswoman Giffords, ladies and gentlemen, good day. My name is Lynne Skelton, serving as Mayor for the Town of Sahuarita. I wish to welcome you all to the town and appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today on the subject of water.

While the Town of Sahuarita possesses no authority with respect to water management and its subsequent supply and quality, it is a matter of paramount importance IF our growing community is to survive and prosper.

Sahuarita's sustainable future will depend on our ability to maintain a physical link between various renewable water sources and the infrastructure required to deliver that water supply to customers within the projected service area.

The demand side can be addressed through various regulatory and non-regulatory means. Increasing supply is another matter entirely, involving long-term planning/strategies and remedies. Both surface water sources and effluent reuse are being utilized or pursued by this community. Many propose that a viable water harvesting policy be studied and adopted, if determined to be feasible.

With continued growth looming on the horizon, we have to assess and confirm the capacity of our five (5) existing private water providers to adequately serve a growing geographical area and population. What new investment vehicles – both public and private – should be considered?

Before any such discussion can take place, an accurate inventory of currently available resources must be compiled. Additionally, we must identify any and all potential partners, collaborators, and capital investors who might also have a role in this effort.

What about the role of the federal government with respect to water supply and management?

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Given our geographical, hydrological, economic, and political realities, on what levels do we pursue Federal collaboration or support? Do we limit it to education and outreach or do we invite them to assume a more prominent role in the policy and operational components?

With the specter of unfunded mandates ever a source of concern for small communities like our own, any partnerships with Washington would have to be massaged to fit our unique profile and characteristics.

Another glaring fact is that local governments must recognize and embrace the central role and commitment they must assume and exhibit in order to meet the formidable challenges inherent in the development of a safe and sustainable water supply policy.

One fact remains clear: as our region continues to grow, we need additional water sources...and we need them now! Given the time required to implement any eventually adopted measures or strategies, we do need to get the ball rolling. There is a clear need to continue and expand the research component that will help us identify what is best for our community.

Congresswoman Giffords, ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for the opportunity to speak before you on this issue of paramount importance.